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SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING:
THE EFFECT OF AFFECTIVE TIES ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL GOALS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Bachelor of Arts with
Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By
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* * * * *

Western Kentucky University
2010

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that children's goals are influenced by emotion and that emotions can be manipulated using relationships. The present study combines these previous findings by examining the effect of children's relationships on social goals. Social goals were examined in second and fifth grade children using hypothetical ambiguous provocation situations in which the relationship between the participant and the provocateur was manipulated by inserting the name of a friend, enemy, or a neutral peer into the story. After each situation, children rated the importance of four different social goals, indicating which of the four would be the most important to accomplish. Results indicated that within each goal type, importance ratings varied depending on the nature of the relationship. Social relational goals were rated as much more important when the provocateur was a friend versus an enemy or neutral peer. Instrumental, avoidant, and revenge goals, however, were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer. Goal hierarchy was also found to vary across relationships; social relational goals were the most important when the provocateur was a friend, yet instrumental goals were rated as most important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer.

Keywords: Social Information Processing, Goals, Relationship, Affective Ties

Dedicated to my friends and family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Child behavior is a much talked about topic among parents, teachers, and researchers across the world. Although many thought processes and actions of children are unclear, understanding these actions is essential when working with children. An abundance of research has focused on how children reason about various social situations and how they react to different types of provocations. These social behaviors serve as the basis for children's social adjustment of which an understanding is critical due to the large amount of evidence that suggests a link between childhood social adjustment and problems in adulthood (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Comprehension of children's reasoning during social situations is essential when investigating the difficulties or problems that lead to maladjustment, and may be vital in creating intervention strategies to prevent and/or treat maladjustment. In order to fully understand the thought processes and behaviors of children within various social situations, individual differences need to be examined. Social information processing explains the differences between individuals as they move through various cognitive processes when encountering a social situation.

Model of Social Information Processing

Throughout the history of psychology, many models have been developed to illustrate and help understand the social adjustment and social interactions of children. These models depict the social information-processing mechanisms of children and display the various stages that occur from the time a child is confronted with a social interaction to the time at which the child acts or responds to the situation. The social information-processing models provide scholars with information on the various cognitive processes that occur during a social interaction, and lend a certain amount of structure to the complex process.

Many of the previous models have been linear in nature, suggesting that as a child interacts with a peer, he /she goes through a series of mental processes that occur one after another in a certain pattern (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In the revised model proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994), it is suggested that rather than a series of steps with a linear relation, children respond to social situations with a variety of mental processes that “actually occur in simultaneous parallel paths” (Crick & Dodge, 1994, p.77). Crick and Dodge’s revised model of social information-processing is highly regarded and used frequently due to its recognition of the non-linear relationship between various stages of processing during a social interaction. This model of social information-processing is cyclical in nature and contains feedback loops that represent the parallel paths and simultaneous actions of certain processes (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

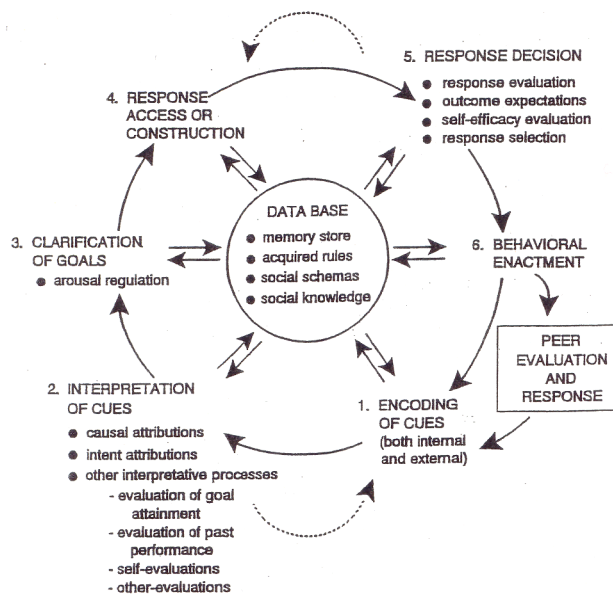


Figure 1.1 Social Information Processing Model as proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994).

In this model it is proposed that children enter into a social situation with a database containing knowledge based on past encounters, social rules, and social schemas. This database is comprised of latent mental structures which include memories of past interactions, and the child's social knowledge. This knowledge serves as an example or model upon which the child can base future interactions, and every new interaction is stored in the child's database of general knowledge and experience so it will, in turn, influence future interactions. According to Crick and Dodge (1994), this database of information changes with age and experience. As the child ages, his/her experience in social situations increases, and the child acquires new and more adept ways of handling

future situations. This database of information affects every aspect of social information-processing and is heavily relied upon as children pass through a series of six steps during the social situation: encoding of cues, interpretation of cues, clarification of goals, response access or construction, response decision, and behavioral enactment (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

According to Crick and Dodge (1994), steps one and two of the social information-processing model are often interrelated and occur at a corresponding time. During these first two steps, encoding and interpreting of cues, the child observes and assesses the situation in order to form a mental representation of what he/she is facing. Both external and internal cues are used to evaluate the situation; the child gets immediate social cues from the behaviors of others and the context of the situation, yet the child also uses previous schemata from his/her database to help interpret these cues. The database of past experiences helps the child to comprehend the present situation. Although these cognitive schemata are efficient, problems arise when the child relies so heavily on previous experience that he/she neglects the social cues of the current context and may respond inappropriately (Crick & Dodge, 1994). At this stage of the process, children not only evaluate contextual cues from the situation, they also evaluate themselves, others, and their past performance (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

While interpreting the cues, children also make attributions of causality and intent (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Children use the social cues to infer the motives behind another's behavior; this attribution of causality and intent greatly influences the child's

decisions in the later steps of the social information process. For example, if a child is tripped by a peer, the child's perception of whether or not their peer meant to trip him/her would greatly affect the child's goals and response to the situation (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

According to Crick and Dodge (1994), the third step in social information-processing is clarification of goals. "A goal is a state of affairs that will give a person satisfaction or relief when attained" (Chung & Asher, 1996, p. 126). In this step the child determines what he/she wants to accomplish in the given situation; this goal could be external or internal. Each child brings certain tendencies or goal preferences to each situation (as part of the database), yet children also modify or change their goals upon interpretation and evaluation of their current social interaction (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The goal that the child chooses in this step of the process has a major impact on his/her behavior and reaction to the situation; goals provide motivation for action. For example, in a situation where a student takes another student's pencil, the actions of a child with a goal to avoid conflict will be much different than those of a child whose goal was to get the pencil back.

After the child has clarified his/her goals, the next step in the process involves accessing his/her database of memories for possible responses: *response access or construction*. If the child has no previous experience with this type of situation, new responses are created during this step based on the immediate social cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Studies have shown that the number of responses the child can access or construct are often important; socially rejected and aggressive children access a smaller

repertoire of responses (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

In the fifth step of this model, children evaluate the responses that they have previously recalled or constructed and, after evaluation, choose the response they wish to enact. Many aspects of each response are thought to be considered during the evaluation phase. Children consider self-efficacy or how confident they are in their ability to enact each response. The appropriateness or outcome of each response is also mentally evaluated before the child finally chooses which response to enact in a given situation (Crick & Dodge, 1994). According to Crick and Dodge (1994), children often evaluate responses based on learned values or social rules, and when evaluating the outcome of the response, they consider consequences of their actions. After each response has been evaluated, the child chooses to enact the response that was the most positively evaluated (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

After choosing a response, the final step of the social information processing model is to enact or perform that response. After enacting the response, the particular social situation may be concluded, yet the social information processing does not end. The model proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994) is cyclical and proposes that after behavioral enactment, the entire social situation is recorded in the child's database for use when encoding cues (step one) in future social situations.

Goal Clarification

Although this model as a whole can tell us a great deal about the social interactions of children, each step can be examined in great detail. Since the present investigation focuses on the third step in Crick and Dodge's model of social information processing:

clarification of goals, research on goal selection is reviewed here.

Behavioral Characteristics

According to Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpaa, and Peets (2005), goals of gaining power or respect are strongly related to aggression whereas goals of relationship maintenance correlate with prosocial behavior. In a study by Lochman, Wayland and White (1993) boys who had been identified by teachers as high-aggressive and low-aggressive were presented with hypothetical situations. The boys then rated each of four goals (avoidance, dominance, revenge, and affiliation) and then reported which one would be their main goal. It was found that aggressive and non-aggressive boys had very different goals; aggressive boys rated dominance and revenge much higher than did non-aggressive boys (Lochman et al., 1993).

In a similar study by Erdley and Asher (1996), fourth and fifth grade students who differed in their behavioral responses were assessed using hypothetical, ambiguous provocation stimuli. Children were identified and grouped based on behavior that they reported they would primarily use in an ambiguous situation (aggressive, withdrawn, and problem-solving) and whether or not they consistently attributed hostile intent. Children were then interviewed about the goals that they would choose in three ambiguous social situations. Children were presented with eight different goals: getting back at the protagonist, working out the problem peacefully, avoiding the protagonist, hurting the person's feelings, protecting the self, taking care of the problem created by the protagonist, maintaining the relationship, and maintaining an assertive reputation. Participants then rated each goal based on the extent to which they would try to

accomplish it. Results indicated that children with differing behavioral responses varied in their social goals. Aggressive children, for example, rated goals such as getting back at the protagonist and making the other person feel bad much higher than did children who were considered to be withdrawn or problem-solvers (Erdley & Asher, 1996). This study provides empirical evidence that social goals are strongly related to behavioral responses; individual differences in social goals strongly correlate with differences in children's exhibited behavior (Erdley & Asher, 1996). Lochman et al. (1993) describe this relationship between goals and behaviors by stating, "Behaviors are the result of individual's expectations that the behaviors will lead to valued outcomes or goals" (p. 136).

Social adjustment

Children's social goals are also related to their social adjustment in many aspects of their lives. Various studies reported by Crick and Dodge (1994) have found a correlation between children's social goals and social adjustment. Social adjustment can be defined as, "the degree to which children get along with their peers; the degree to which they engage in adaptive, competent social behavior; and the extent to which they inhibit aversive, incompetent behavior" (Crick & Dodge, 1994, p. 82). Formulation of goals that enhance relationships have been found to be related to positive social adjustment (i.e. peer popularity and prosocial behavior), whereas the construction of goals that may damage a relationship are linked to social maladjustment (i.e. aggressive behavior) (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Lochman et al. (1993) found that dominant goal patterns were related to

more aggressive behavior, substance abuse, low self-esteem, peer rejection, less prosocial behavior, and more depression. These studies demonstrate the importance of creating appropriate social goals in order to improve overall social adjustment.

Goals and strategies

Past research has also focused on the relationship between children's social goals and their strategies for resolving conflicts. "The type of goal that a child gives highest priority to is likely to produce a related behavioral strategy" (Kazura & Flanders, 2007 p. 547). A study by Chung and Asher (1996) examined this link between goals and strategies by asking children to state their goals and strategies for each of twelve hypothetical conflict situations. After each vignette, children were given five strategies to choose from (types of strategies included prosocial, hostile, assertive, passive, and adult-seeking). Then children's goals were assessed by asking the child why he/she would behave that way and allowing him/her to choose from four types of goals: relationship goals, control goals, self-interest goals, and avoidance goals (Chung & Asher, 1996). A positive correlation was found between the selection of relationship goals and prosocial and passive strategies and also between the selection of control goals and hostile strategies. Children who selected avoidance goals were also more likely to choose a more prosocial strategy. Goals can affect strategies both directly, when children pursue a certain goal, and indirectly, affecting children's attention and interpretation of social cues. This study provided evidence of the link between children's goals and their strategies used to solve conflict; children select strategies that are consistent with their goals (Chung & Asher, 1996).

A similar study by Rose and Asher (1999) used 30 hypothetical situations and asked fourth and fifth grade children to rate one of six goals (relationship, moral, tension reduction, instrumental, control, and revenge) and six strategy options (accommodation, compromise, self-interest assertion, verbal aggression, leaving, threat of termination of friendship). Children were then asked to circle the names of their three best friends so that reciprocal friendships could be identified. Rose and Asher's findings were consistent with Chung and Asher (1996) in that children's social goals strongly correlated with strategies. Results also indicated that social goals predicted friendship adjustment, and suggested that goals of revenge may lead to the destruction of friendships (Rose & Asher, 1999).

A later study by Kazura and Flanders (2007) looked at the relationship of goals and strategies in preschool age children. Puppets were used to act out hypothetical situations and children were then asked to use their puppet to finish the ending of the story (to display their conflict strategy). Children were then asked which one of five pictures displaying conflict goals (remain friends, need help, walk away, retaliate, not upset) best matched their goal in the situation. Results revealed that logical associations between goals and strategies appear in children as young as three (Kazura & Flanders, 2007). Findings were consistent with Chung and Asher (1996) in that friendship goals were positively correlated with prosocial strategies, avoidance goals were positively correlated with adult-seeking strategies, and retaliation goals were positively correlated with hostile strategies (Kazura & Flanders, 2007). These results indicate the importance of children's social goals for their subsequent strategies and behavior.

Influences on Children's Goals

Although multiple studies have looked at the effects of goals on behavior, some have also examined influences on children's goals. In a study by Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpaa, and Peets (2005), children's peer-relational schemas (their views of themselves and their peers) were found to have an impact on children's social goals. Children's perceptions of themselves and others were assessed; then children were asked to rate a series of goals based on how important each goal was to them. The goals presented were a mixture of agentic and communal goals (Salmivalli et al., 2005). Results showed that social goals mediate the effects of self-perception and peer-perception on social behavior. A positive perception of one's self was correlated with agentic (power) goals, and the agentic goals were then correlated with aggressive behavior. A positive peer-perception was correlated with communal goals: goals associated with prosocial behavior (Salmivalli et al., 2005). Although self and peer perception appear to have different influences on children's social goals, when looked at together, the complexity of their influence becomes apparent. For example, a child with a positive perception of both himself/herself and peers would give high ratings to both agentic and communal goals. Salmivalli et al. (2005) concluded that both self-perception and peer-perception combine to influence children's social goals.

Erdley and Asher (1996) concluded that social goals are also related to self-efficacy; children choose a goal that they are certain they can use to successfully ameliorate the situation. For example, aggressive children are more likely to choose a more aggressive goal such as getting back at the protagonist because they feel that they would be better at performing that than using prosocial actions.

Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) suggested that children's social goals can be influenced or changed by obstacles to conflict resolution. In a study of children ages 9-12, each participant was given hypothetical situations, asked what he/she would do in each situation, and then asked to rate each of 11 goals. Participants were asked what they would do if their chosen strategy did not work. They were asked to give a second strategy and rate the different goals once again. Troop-Gordon and Asher found that children make significant changes in their social goals after the failure of a resolution strategy. Results indicated a decrease in the ratings for relationship maintenance goals after facing a resolution obstacle, and goals such as retaliation and instrumental became of a much stronger focus for rejected children after a failed strategy (Troop-Gordon & Asher, 2005). These findings suggest that children's social goals may be strongly influenced or changed based on previous obstacles or failures of previous strategies.

Gender has also been examined to discover its effects on social goals. Salmivalli et al. (2005) found that females rate communal goals (those that involve relationship maintenance) much higher than males do. Boys also select more control goals than girls, whereas girls select more avoidance goals than boys (Chung & Asher, 1996). The gender differences in goals may account for some of the behavioral differences when responding in social situations.

Emotion and Social Information Processing

Although studies have shown that perception, self-efficacy, and gender influence children's social goals, one of the strongest influences on goal selection is emotion. Crick and Dodge (1994) address the fact that emotion can influence every step of social

information processing, yet the role of emotion was excluded from their 1994 model. In a more recent model of social information processing by Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) the important aspect of emotion was integrated into every step of the model proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994).

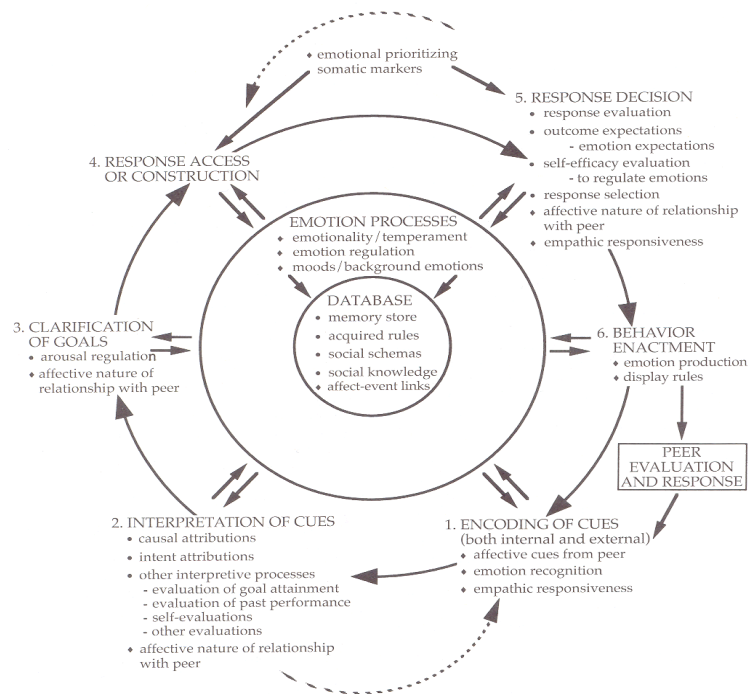


Figure 1.2 Social Information Processing model with the addition of emotion
(Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000)

Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) proposed that emotion is a major part of the child's database with which he/she enters a social situation. Children have different emotional styles based on biological traits, different regulatory and emotion management skills, and they enter each social situation with a different mood that may be caused from previous

events. It is also argued that during the first step of the SIP process (encoding and interpreting social cues) the emotions of others in the situation, such as the provocateur, must be interpreted along with personal emotions. For example, if a child is bumped while walking down the hallway, he/she must interpret the affective cues of the other individual in order to determine whether or not it was intentional. Intensity of emotions and current mood of the child also affect what cues are attended to in a given situation which affects how children interpret the situation (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Although Dodge and Crick acknowledge that emotions can affect goal selection which can in turn modify emotions, Lemerise and Arsenio take it one step further by stating that the emotions of other peers within the social context can influence goal selection. For example, “Children who are overwhelmed by their own and/or others’ emotions may choose avoidant or hostile goals to reduce their own arousal” (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000, p. 114). Lemerise and Arsenio also touch on the idea that emotional ties in social relationships may influence the selection of particular goals; goals may differ when the situation involves a friend versus a less positive relationship.

This current model of social information processing also addresses the concept of emotion in the last steps of the social information processing model: response construction, decision, and enactment. Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) suggest that the ability to access certain responses is influenced by the child’s current emotions and his/her ability to regulate emotions. For example, children who have a hard time regulating strong emotions may be so overwhelmed that they cannot effectively generate and evaluate a variety of responses (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). Lemerise and Arsenio

expand on this topic by suggesting that the emotional ties children have with other peers involved in a social encounter will affect how carefully the response options are evaluated. In the final step of social information processing, response enactment, it is suggested that the child's emotions along with the emotional cues of others involved in the situation provide feedback with which the child can alter his/her actions (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Effect of Emotion on Goals

As Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) address in their revised model of social information processing, emotions and the ability to regulate those emotions have a strong influence on the type of goals selected during a social situation. Emotion may affect the goals of individuals differently depending on their level of adjustment or emotion regulation skills. For example, children who struggle with emotion regulation may also struggle with choosing prosocial goals when faced with conflict (Harper, Lemerise, & Caverly, in press). Recent research has focused on the role that emotion plays in goal selection both when expressed by the provocateur and when experienced by the participant.

According to Lemerise, Fredstrom, Kelley, Bowersox, and Waford (2006), the emotion displayed by the provocateur has an influence on goal selection. Provocateur's emotions were manipulated by presenting videotaped ambiguous provocation situations in which the provocateur appeared happy, sad, or angry. When asked to rate the importance of six different goals (dominance, revenge, avoid trouble, avoid provocateur, problem focus, social relational), social relational goals were rated as one of the highest

when the provocateur was happy or sad, but not when he/she was angry. Lemerise et al. (2006) also found that the influence of emotion differed depending on the child's social adjustment. Emotion of the provocateur strongly influenced the goal selection of rejected children and affected whether or not a deviant goal was selected. When the provocateur appeared angry or sad, rejected-aggressive children rated goals of dominance and revenge as more important than other children. This suggests that the display of sadness or anger increase the likelihood of revenge goals (Lemerise et al., 2006).

In a more recent study by Harper, Lemerise, and Caverly (in press) the effect of the participant's emotion or mood on goal selection was examined in first, second, and third graders. Emotional memories were used to induce happy, angry, or neutral moods in the participants before the presentation of ambiguous provocation vignettes. When asked if they preferred a social relational or instrumental goal to solve each provocation, those who were in an angry mood chose instrumental goals more often. When anger was induced, children were less likely to pursue relationship maintenance goals and more likely to focus on self-focused goals (Harper et al., in press). This study also found that the induction of anger had a stronger influence on the goal selection of aggressive children than non-aggressive children suggesting that aggressive children may be more vulnerable to this emotion (Harper et al., in press). These results indicated the important influence of discrete emotions on the goal step of social information processing.

Relationships as a way to manipulate emotion

Since much research has shown the important influence of emotion on social information processing (especially the selection of goals), it is necessary to understand

the many ways that emotion can be manipulated. Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) suggested that one way to manipulate emotion is by manipulating the affective ties between the subject and the provocateur. Lemerise and Arsenio hypothesized that emotional ties to the provocateur may change emotional states and affect each aspect of the social information process.

Previous studies have examined the influence of affective ties on attributions of intent and behavioral strategies. Peets, Hodges, and Salmivalli (2007) manipulated affective ties in fourth graders by presenting ambiguous situations in which the name of a friend, enemy, or neutral peer was used as the provocateur in hypothetical situations. Children were asked to describe the provocateur's intentions and how they would respond to the situation. It was found that children's attributions of intent and behavioral strategies varied significantly as a function of relationship. More hostile intentions were attributed in situations where the provocateur was an enemy; behavior was interpreted more positively when the provocateur was a friend (Peets et al., 2007). Hostile behavioral strategies were also reported more when the provocateur was an enemy versus a friend or neutral peer.

A study using similar procedures for shy/withdrawn and aggressive children manipulated emotion by substituting an unfamiliar peer or a mutual friend for the provocateur (Burgess, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Rose-Kransor & Booth-LaForce, 2006). Children were asked to report the intent of the provocateur (prosocial, external blame, internal blame, or neutral), how they would feel (okay, sad, angry, or embarrassed), and how they would cope with the situation (avoidance, adult intervention, revenge, emotion,

or appeasement). It was found that when the situation involved a mutual friend, children were more likely to attribute prosocial intent and choose appeasement coping strategies and less likely to choose an avoidant strategy (Burgess et al., 2006). When a mutual friend served as the provocateur, aggressive children were less likely to choose a revenge strategy, and shy/withdrawn children were less likely to attribute internal blame (Burgess et al., 2006). These findings are consistent with an earlier study by Ray and Cohen (1997) which presented audio-recorded accidental, ambiguous, and hostile situations using friends, acquaintances, and enemies of elementary school children. In ambiguous situations, children rated the provocateur's intentions and reported their response as more positive when dealing with friends than with enemies (Ray & Cohen, 1997). These findings suggest that children give friends the "benefit of the doubt" when dealing with ambiguous social situations (Peets et al., 2007).

This same bias towards friends has also been found in situations in which liked or disliked peers performed behaviors that had a clear positive or negative outcome for the subject. Hymel (1986) examined children's attribution of intent in these types of situations and found that when interacting with a liked peer (friend) children were more likely to dismiss negative behaviors and give credit for positive behaviors. DeLawyer and Foster (1986) used a very similar procedure in order to examine children's feelings and responses in social situations. Although they found that children reported more active responses towards disliked peers, the responses were just as prosocial when dealing with disliked peers as liked peers: a contrast to other findings.

These findings have been replicated in children as young as preschool age. Fabes,

Eisenberg, Smith, and Murphy (1996) collected observational data on preschoolers' responses to anger episodes with liked and disliked peers. It was observed that boys were less likely to use a physical response when the anger episode was with a liked peer, yet they were more likely to overtly express anger in their response to a well liked peer (Fabes et al., 1996). The combination of previous research supports the idea that children's emotional ties to the provocateur influence the way that they process a social situation (Fabes et al., 1996).

Gaps in the Research

This study will focus on the step of the Social Information Processing model in which children clarify what their goal for the situation would be, or what they wish to accomplish by their response to a situation. Although there have been previous studies examining the social goals of children and the effect of relationships on attribution and response, a major gap in the research lies in the combination of these two areas: the relationship between goals and affective ties. The present study analyzed how children's social goals change depending on whether the social situation involves a friend, enemy, or someone who is completely neutral.

It was hypothesized that the manipulation of relationship between the participant and the provocateur would result in different goal ratings across relationships. Social relational goals were predicted to receive higher ratings when children were confronted with situations involving friends rather than enemies or neutral peers. In contrast, instrumental, avoidant, and revenge goals were predicted to receive lower ratings when the situation involved a friend than when an enemy was involved. It was also predicted

that the hierarchy of goals would change as a function of the child's relationship with the provocateur; the order of importance of the four goals would change depending on the nature of the relationship.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants were second (n=55) and fifth (n=42) grade students from seven classes in two elementary schools in Bowling Green (a mid-sized university town in southern Kentucky). Consent was obtained at all levels: a full board review by the Human Subjects Research Board and permission by school board, principals, individual teachers. In order to obtain parental consent, a letter describing the study was sent to the parents or guardians of each student, and parents were asked to contact the researcher with any further questions. Within the letter, parents were asked to indicate whether or not their child could participate and return the form back to the child's teacher where it could be collected by the researcher. Only 23 students in the participating classes did not receive parental permission to participate. Participant assent was also obtained upon the start of each interview, and only those obtaining parental consent and assenting themselves participated. A total of 97 children participated in the interview (44 boys and 53 girls), and of the participants, 65% were Caucasian, 14% were African American, 13% were classified as "other", and there were 8% with missing racial data. Ages of children ranged from 6 to 11 with an average age of 7.66 years (SD .61) for second graders and 10.81 years (SD .39) for fifth graders.

Procedure

Individual interviews were conducted in a quiet area of the child's school (i.e. an unused classroom, quiet hallway, or empty lunchroom) during teacher appointed times. During each interview, the experimenter presented nine vignettes (see Appendix A) about ambiguous social situations: hypothetical situations in which a provocateur causes harm to the child yet it is unclear whether it was intended (i.e. *Pretend that you and your class went on a field trip to the zoo. You stop to buy a coke. Suddenly, _____ bumps your arm and spills your coke all over your shirt. The coke is cold, and your shirt is all wet*). Each of the vignettes was read aloud to the child and corresponding illustrations were presented (see Appendix B). Along with the vignette being read aloud, a written copy was also placed in front of the participant so they could follow along.

Affective ties were manipulated by reading a description of a relationship type (friend, neutral, enemy) (Peets, Hodges, Kikas, & Salmivalli, 2007) and then asking the child to identify a classmate who fit that description; if a child could not identify a classmate, he/she was then allowed to choose someone outside of his/her class. Each participant was presented three vignettes regarding each relationship type. The order of the presentation of vignettes was counterbalanced across the nine different stories, and each participant was randomly assigned one of six different versions of the interview in which the order of the nine stories and the relationship type were counterbalanced (friend, neutral, enemy *or* enemy, neutral, friend).

For each vignette, the child was asked to pretend that he/she was the victim of the situation and that the classmate whom they selected was the provocateur. When reading

the vignette, the experimenter substituted the name of the chosen classmate for the provocateur. After reading each story, the experimenter asked the child to rate the importance of four different social goals: to be liked, to get revenge, to get away from the provocateur, and to get their way. Each of the goal choices were read aloud to the participant and a written copy was also placed in front of the participant. Each child rated the importance of each goal on a scale of one to five; one (not at all important), two (a little important), three (important), four (pretty important), and five (most important of all). A diagram of the five point scale (a bar graph of increasing values) was displayed for the participant, clearly explained, and rating options were read to the participant in counterbalanced order until the experimenter was assured of the child's understanding of the rating system. If two goals were rated the same, the child was then asked to choose the goal that was most important. The experimenter recorded the participant's response next to each goal on an experimenter protocol sheet.

Each student was also assigned a SSID number with which the participant's name and the names of those they provided for each relationship type were replaced in order to maintain upmost confidentiality. For second graders, stickers were given at the end of each set of three vignettes (covering one relationship type) in order to maintain their concentration and interest in the interview. At the completion of each interview the participant was praised for his/her work, reminded to keep the interview questions a secret, and then escorted back to class by the experimenter.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Analysis Strategy

It was hypothesized that the relationship between the participant and the provocateur would have a significant effect on type of goals chosen and the order of importance of each set of goals. Results are presented in two sections describing each type of interaction: a) relationship by goal type and b) goal hierarchy. An initial MANOVA examined the effects of grade, gender, and relationship on goal type ratings (relationship (3) x goal type (4) x grade (2) x gender (2)). A significant within subjects, multivariate interaction was found between relationship and goal type, $F(6, 558) = 55.01$, $p < .0001$. The significant multivariate interaction indicated that relationship had an effect on goal choice and thus varied by goal type. Therefore, this multivariate interaction was then followed up with univariate analyses on each goal type. Univariate analyses on each relationship category were also analyzed in order to determine goal hierarchy within a single relationship type. Differences among groups within each univariate analysis were determined using Tukey's HSD tests.

The impact of relationship within goal types

Social relational goal

The social relational goal (to have the provocateur like you) was the only goal in which a significant grade effect was found, $F(1, 93) = 4.85, p < .04$. Differences in goal ratings by grade are depicted in Figure 3.1. On average, second graders rated the social relational goal ($M = 3.23$) higher than fifth graders ($M = 2.84$).

Grade Effect Within Social Relational Goal

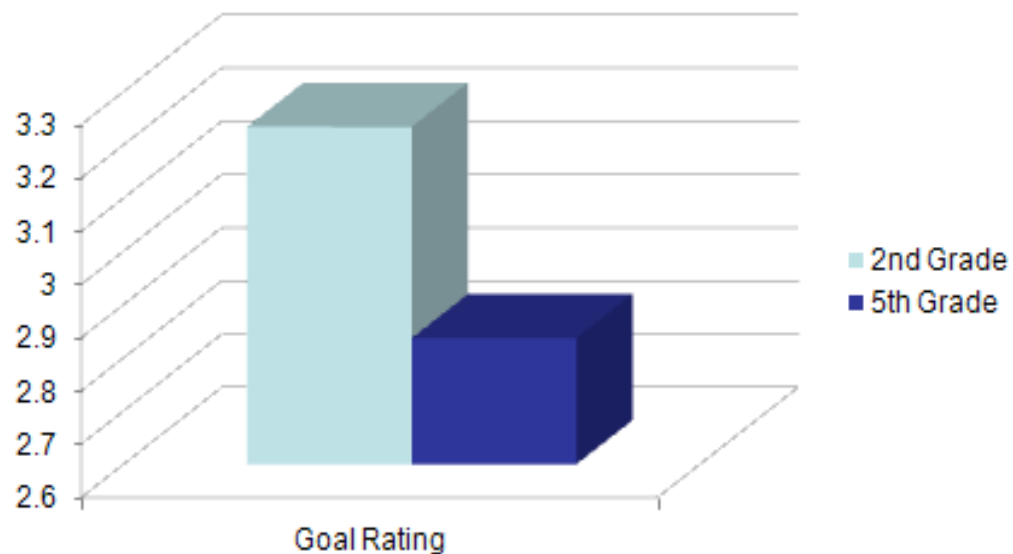


Figure 3.1 Grade Effect Within Social Relational Goal: Displays the difference between second and fifth graders in their ratings of the social relational goal.

Table 3.1 Relationship Effects Within Each Goal Type

Goal	Friend	Neutral	Enemy	Interaction
Social Relational	3.959	2.887	2.261	$F > N^{**} > E^{**}$
Instrumental	2.945	3.336	3.408	$F < N^{**}, E^{**}$
Avoidant	1.806	2.337	2.950	$F < N^{**} < E^{**}$
Revenge	1.717	1.971	2.157	$F < N^*, E^{**}$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3.1 Relationship Effects Within Each Goal Type. Represents the mean ratings of each goal type as a function of relationship.

Relationship type clearly effected the ratings of social relational goals, $F(2, 186) = 83.53, p < .001$. Within subjects Tukey's HSD tests were used to examine the differences between the three relationship types: friend, neutral, and enemy. Results indicated that children rated the social relational goal significantly higher when the provocateur was a friend than when confronting a neutral peer, and social relational goals were rated the lowest when the provocateur was an enemy (see Table 3.1). All differences were significant at $p < .01$.

Instrumental goals

A significant relationship effect was also found for the instrumental goal (to get

the provocateur to stop unwanted behavior, $F(2, 186) = 13.81, p < .001$. Within subjects Tukey's HSD tests revealed that children rated the instrumental goals lower when the provocateur was a friend than when the provocateur was a neutral peer or an enemy, see Table 3.1 ($ps < .01$). The differences between instrumental goal ratings when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer were not significant.

Avoidance Goals

The relationship of the participant with the provocateur had a significant effect on ratings of avoidance goals $F(2, 186) = 48.60, p < .001$. When the provocateur was an enemy, the goal of getting away was rated much higher than when the provocateur was a neutral peer or a friend (see Table 3.1). Avoidance goals were rated the lowest when the provocateur was a friend. Each of these differences was significant at $p < .01$.

Revenge Goals

There also was a significant relationship effect for the rating of revenge goals, $F(2, 186) = 8.84, p < .001$. Getting revenge on the provocateur was rated as much less important when the provocateur was a friend than when a neutral peer or an enemy (see Table 3.1) served as the provocateur. Revenge goal importance ratings for friends were lower than for neutral peers, $p < .05$ and lower than for enemies, $p < .01$. The difference between ratings when the provocateur was a neutral peer versus an enemy was not statistically significant. Results indicate that the relationship between the participant and the provocateur significantly impacted the importance of each goal type in various ambiguous social situations.

Impact of Relationship on Goal Hierarchy

Table 3.2 Goal Hierarchy

Goal	Friend	Neutral	Enemy
Social Relational	3.961 ^a	2.901 ^a	2.305 ^a
Instrumental	2.958 ^b	3.327 ^b	3.406 ^b
Avoidant	1.816 ^c	2.332 ^c	2.942 ^c
Revenge	1.748 ^c	1.996 ^c	2.169 ^a

Table 3.2 Goal Hierarchy. Depicts the ranking or order of importance of each set of four goals within each relationship type. Within a column, values that do not share a superscript are significantly different from one another.

After each goal type was examined across relationships, each relationship was examined across goals in order to determine any differences between the order of importance or goal hierarchy among each relationship type.

Friends

When comparing the importance of each goal type when the provocateur was a friend, a clear order of importance was found, $F(3, 291) = 118.96, p < .001$. Within subjects Tukey's HSD tests revealed that the most important goal in social situations in which a friend is the provocateur is a social relational goal. The social relational goal was rated more important than instrumental, avoidant, and revenge goals, $ps < .01$ (see Table 3.2). The second most important goal when the provocateur was a friend was an instrumental goal: to have him/her stop the unwanted behavior. Instrumental goals were

rated significantly higher than goals of avoidance or revenge, $ps < .01$. The lowest rated goals, or least important in this situation were those of avoidance and revenge, yet these two goals were not statistically different from one another. The results demonstrate that when placed in a social situation in which a friend was the provocateur, the most important thing to a child was to maintain that friendship by “having the other person like them” and the least important was to get away or get revenge on the provocateur.

Neutral Peers

When the provocateur was a neutral peer, the goal hierarchy was different from that when the provocateur was a friend. Data revealed that there were differences between the importance ratings of each goal when the provocateur was a neutral peer, $F(3, 285) = 27.84, p < .001$. Within this relationship, results from Tukey’s HSD tests indicated that the most important goal was no longer a social relational goal, but an instrumental goal. The instrumental goal was rated significantly higher than the social relational goal, $p < .05$, and higher than avoidance and revenge goals, $ps < .01$ (see Table 3.2). Social relational goals were found to be rated as the second most important goal: significantly higher than avoidance and revenge goals, $ps < .01$. Once again, a Tukey’s HSD test revealed that avoidance and revenge goals were not statistically different. Results suggest that in ambiguous social situations in which the provocateur is a neutral peer the most important thing for children to accomplish in the situation was to get the peer to stop the unwanted behavior whereas avoiding the peer and getting back at him/her was the least important.

Enemies

When analyzing data from situations in which the provocateur was an enemy, results showed that the hierarchy of goals significantly changed once again $F, (3, 285) = 33.13, p < .001$. The goal rated most important in this relationship context did not differ from that in which a neutral peer was the provocateur. Tukey's HSD tests revealed that instrumental goals were rated significantly higher than social relational, avoidance, and revenge goals, $ps < .01$ (see Table 3.2). The difference within this relationship context, however, was found in the goal rated as second in importance. When the provocateur was an enemy, avoidance goals or getting away from the provocateur were rated higher than social relational and revenge goals, $ps < .01$. Social relational goals and revenge goals were not rated significantly differently. According to these data, when placed in a social situation in which the provocateur is an enemy, the most important goals for children were to get the peer to stop and to avoid him/her whereas getting revenge and maintaining favor with the provocateur were the least important. Although results suggest that affective ties with the provocateur have an influence on what goals children think are important, one of the most interesting findings in the goal hierarchy data was that social relational goals went from being the most important when dealing with a friend to one of the least important when dealing with an enemy.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The major purpose of this study was to examine whether children's goals are influenced by their relationship with the provocateur in ambiguous social interactions. Crick and Dodge (1994) discuss the importance of goals within the social information processing model and Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) convey the importance of emotion within each aspect of this model. The current study provides empirical evidence which expands upon these topics by demonstrating the effect of emotion, through the use of relationship manipulation, on the goal step of social information processing. Findings indicated that the affective ties or emotions felt towards the provocateur in ambiguous social situations greatly influence the selection of goals during the social information process.

As hypothesized, the manipulation of relationship between the participant and the provocateur resulted in different goal ratings across relationships. Social relational goals received higher ratings when children were confronted with situations involving friends than when the situations involved enemies or neutral peers. This suggests that, for children, relationship maintenance is the most important goal in ambiguous provocation situations involving a friend, yet maintaining a relationship with a neutral peer or an

enemy is less important. Within the context of social relational goals, a significant developmental effect was also found. Second grade students rated the social relational goal (having the other person like you) as much more important than did fifth grade students, suggesting a stronger need for social acceptance at a younger age. This could be due to younger children's desire to please everyone and the teachings from parents and other caregivers to "be nice". As age increases, however, children often learn that, in order to get what they want, they cannot merely strive for acceptance and relationship maintenance in every situation. Findings suggest that, with age and experience, children learn to choose goals that are more effective in reaching a desired outcome.

Although social relational goals were rated more important when the provocateur was a friend, instrumental goals were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer than when he/she was a friend; getting what was wanted was less important when the provocateur was friend. This indicates that children may be more willing to sacrifice their desires in a social situation in order to maintain a positive relationship with a friend, whereas this willingness is not present when a neutral peer or an enemy is involved.

Avoidance goals were found to be the most important when the ambiguous situations involved an enemy and least important when a friend served as the provocateur. This suggests that getting away from the provocateur and avoiding the situation entirely is more likely to happen when the provocateur is an enemy. The importance of revenge goals also differed across relationships; revenge was significantly less important when the provocateur was a friend than when an enemy or neutral peer

was involved. An interesting finding was that the importance of revenge when interacting with a neutral peer was not significantly different than the importance of revenge when interacting with an enemy. This suggests something special about friendships in their ability to moderate aggressive goals. The link between goals and strategies (Chung & Asher, 1996) combined with evidence from the present study suggests that aggressive behavior may be more likely in ambiguous situations when the provocateur is a neutral peer or an enemy. Overall, these findings provide empirical evidence for the previously hypothesized influence of relationship on goal selection (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000)

The hierarchy of goals within the context of each relationship also differed maintaining findings consistent with the hypothesis; the order of importance of each goal changed as a function of the child's relationship with the provocateur. When the provocateur was a friend, the most important goal was to maintain the relationship and gain the approval of the provocateur. The second most important goal was get the desired outcome (for example, get their place back in line). Avoidant and revenge goals were ranked as the least important when in an ambiguous situation involving a friend.

The goal hierarchy changed within the context of a neutral peer. The most important goal changed from social relational to an instrumental goal. When dealing with a neutral peer, getting the desired outcome was the most important goal whereas maintaining the approval of the provocateur shifted down to second most important. Avoidant and revenge goals were once again rated as the least important when interacting with a neutral peer. Within the context of an enemy, however, social relational (having the provocateur like them) and revenge goals were rated as the least important whereas

the most important goal was to get the desired outcome (instrumental goal). In a previous study by Harper et al. (in press) it was found that anger increased the focus on self-interested (instrumental) goals such as getting a place back in line. This finding serves as a possible explanation for the reason children choose instrumental goals as being the most important when dealing with a neutral peer or an enemy. Ambiguous provocation by a friend does not induce anger, yet provocation by an enemy or neutral peer does; when anger is induced, children are more likely to choose an instrumental goal (Harper et al., in press).

It was an interesting finding that social relational goals went from being the most important goal within the context of a friend as the provocateur to being one of the least important goals when the provocateur was an enemy. This suggests that children are less concerned with maintaining the relationship and receiving approval when the provocateur is an enemy. A second interesting finding was that whereas revenge goals were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer, revenge was still ranked as one of the least important goals across each relationship type. This suggests that revenge is not a commonly chosen goal among children of this age group.

Implications

A major contribution of the present study is the idea that goal selection is not a steady personality trait, but instead a decision that hinges upon the context of each situation. Although previous research has found that strategies and hostile attributions of intent, change as a function of relationship type (Peets et al., 2007), the present study provides evidence that this change is also found in goal selection. Although many

children are labeled as having aggressive personalities due to enacting revenge goals or as being withdrawn due to the enactment of avoidance goals, this study suggests that these goal choices may not be stable across all situations. Children do not simply always choose a revenge goal because of an aggressive personality trait. Instead, revenge goals are more likely to be selected when the provocateur is a neutral peer or an enemy, but much less likely to be selected if the provocateur is a friend. It is also thought that some children try to please everyone and will always select social relational goals, yet this study indicated that social relational goals are much less likely to be selected when the provocateur is an enemy.

These findings have major implications for future research and all those involved in working with children. The comprehension of children's social interactions and their goal choices is essential to the prevention or treatment of social maladjustment. Findings suggest that a bias towards friends is established within the context of ambiguous provocation. This bias may serve as a buffer for maladjusted children who often react with aggressive or avoidance goals except within the context of friendship. The knowledge that goal selection varies across relationship contexts and is not a steady personality trait can aid in intervention strategies. Professionals may be able to work with children to lessen their revenge and avoidance goal choices by teaching them to choose goals consistent with what they would choose if the provocateur was a friend.

Limitations and Future Directions

An area of importance not covered by this study is the differences in impact of affective ties between children who vary in social adjustment. Previous research has

examined differences between socially maladjusted children and well adjusted children in their behavioral strategies and attribution of intent (Burgess et al., 2006). Socially maladjusted children have been found to choose more revenge or instrumental type strategies (Kazura & Flander, 2007; Lochman et al., 1993) which predicts that they may also choose goals of similar intent. Lemerise et al. (2006) revealed that children's social adjustment interacted with the provocateur's emotion for children's goal ratings. Unfortunately, the sample size of the present study was not large enough to examine the interaction between relationship, social adjustment, and goal type, yet with a larger sample size, an effect of social adjustment is expected.

Although previous research has found significant gender and developmental differences (Chung & Asher, 1999); (Salmivalli et al., 2005), the small size of the current study inhibited similar findings. With more participants, larger gender and developmental differences may be present. Future research can focus on these areas, examining social adjustment, gender, and developmental differences within the context of relationship manipulation and social goals.

A second limitation to this study is the forced-choice response style and hypothetical nature of the interview. Four specific goal choices were presented to each participant, yet there are also many other goal possibilities. By limiting the goal choices to four specific actions, it may prevent the children from being able to respond with their primary goal which they would actually have in a given situation. The presentation of four goal choices limits children's responses and may increase cognitive reflection thus reducing the spontaneity found in real-life situations. A goal for future research should be

to include open-ended questions in which children are free to respond with their first instinct or with their own unique goal for the situation. Observation of actual social interactions (Fabes et al., 1996) will be helpful in the future in order to create a more realistic picture of children's social interactions and how they are affected by relationships.

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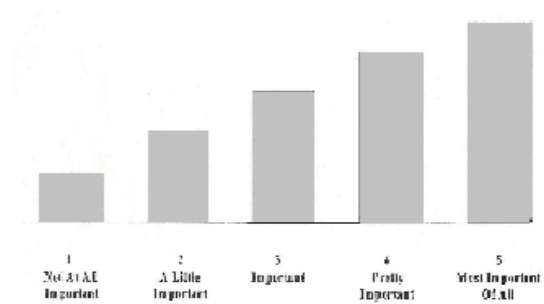
APPENDIX A

Protocol:

Friend: _____

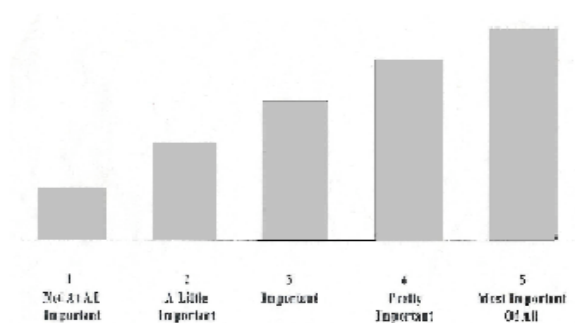
Now think about a boy (girl) from your class who is your best friend. You regard him (her) as your best friend and he (she) considers you his (her) best friend. You spend a lot of time together. You are having fun together. You have been friends for a while already.

1. Pretend that you and your class went on a field trip to the zoo. You stop to buy a coke. Suddenly, _____ bumps your arm and spills your coke all over your shirt. The coke is cold, and your shirt is all wet.



In this situation, how important would it be...

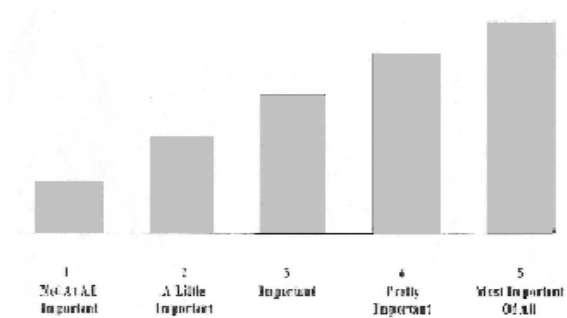
- i. To get away from _____ (3)
 - ii. To get back at _____ (4)
 - iii. To have _____ like you (1)
 - iv. To have _____ stop bumping into you (2)
2. Pretend that you are at school one day, and you are lining up with your class to go to recess. Just as you are getting in line _____ says "I want this spot!" and cuts in front of you.



In this situation, how important would it be...

- i. To have _____ like you (1)
- ii. To get your place back in line (2)
- iii. To get away from _____ (3)
- iv. To get back at _____ (4)

3. Pretend that you are walking down the hallway in school. You are carrying your books in your arm and talking. You stumble and fall and your books go flying across the floor, _____ makes fun of you.



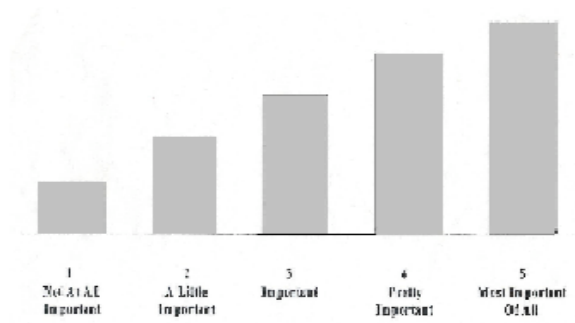
In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get _____ to stop making fun of you
- ii. To have _____ like you
- iii. To get back at _____
- iv. To get away from _____

Neutral: _____

Now think about a boy (girl) from your class whom you do not know well. It does not mean that you do not like him (her) or he (she) does not like you. You do not know each other so well to be sure if you like each other or not.

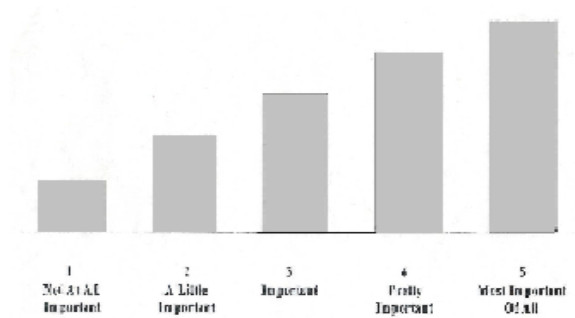
4. Pretend that you are playing a game with _____ and you realize that _____ has taken your turn.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get back at _____
- ii. To get away from _____
- iii. To get your turn back
- iv. To have _____ like you

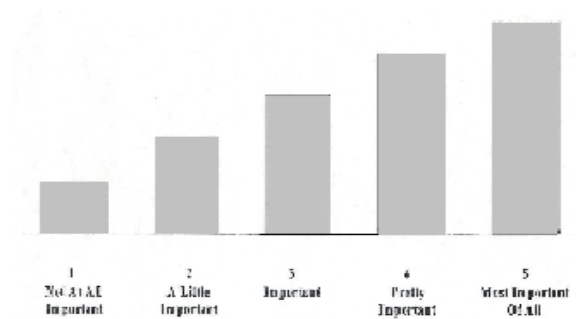
5. Pretend you are on the playground playing a game with _____. You accidentally rip your pants, and _____ starts laughing at you.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To have _____ stop laughing at you
- ii. To get back at _____
- iii. To have _____ like you
- iv. To get away from _____

6. Pretend that you are walking to school and you are wearing brand new sneakers. You really like your new sneakers and this is the first day you have worn them. Suddenly, _____ bumps you from behind. You stumble into a mud puddle and your new sneakers get muddy.



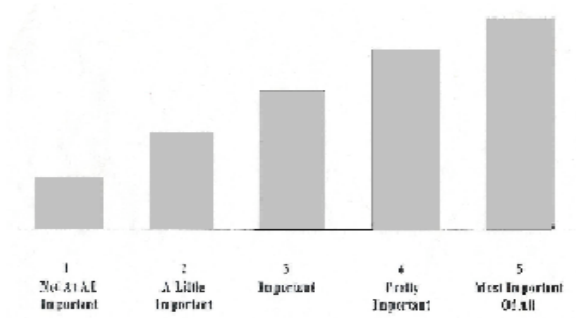
In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To have _____ like you
- ii. To get away from _____
- iii. To get _____ to stop pushing you down
- iv. To get back at _____

Enemy: _____

Now think about a boy (girl) from your class with whom you do not along well. You do not like the boy (girl) and he (she) does not like you either. You argue with each other. You have not been getting along for a while already.

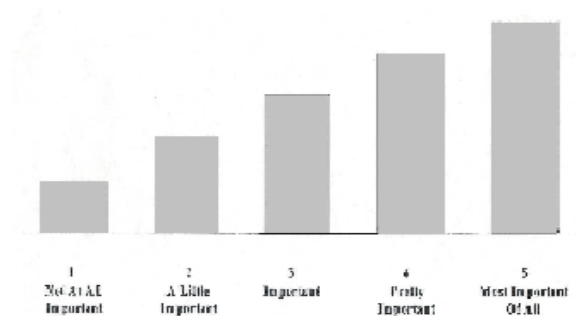
7. You ask _____ to watch cartoons one Saturday morning. After about ten minutes, _____ changes the channel without asking.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get back at _____
- ii. To have _____ change the channel back
- iii. To have _____ like you
- iv. To get away from _____

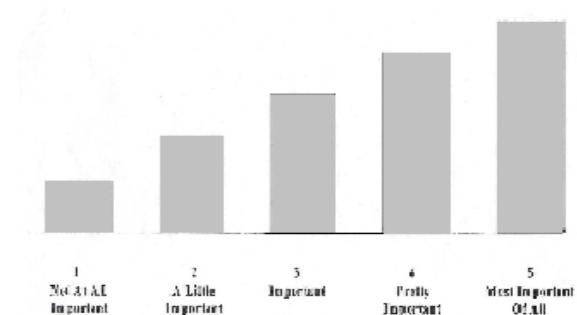
8. Pretend that you are on the playground playing catch with _____. You throw the ball to _____ and he/she catches it. You turn around, and the next thing you realize is that _____ has thrown the ball and hit you in the middle of your back. The ball hits you hard, and it hurts a lot.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get away from _____
- ii. To have _____ like you
- iii. To get back at _____
- iv. To have _____ stop throwing the ball at you

9. Pretend that you and _____ are both on the playground and _____ starts calling you names and making fun of you.



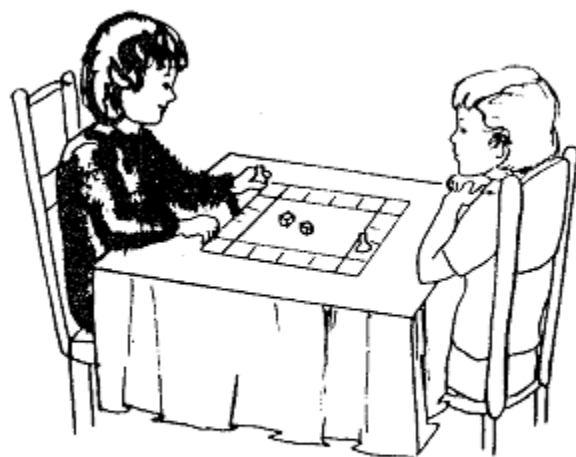
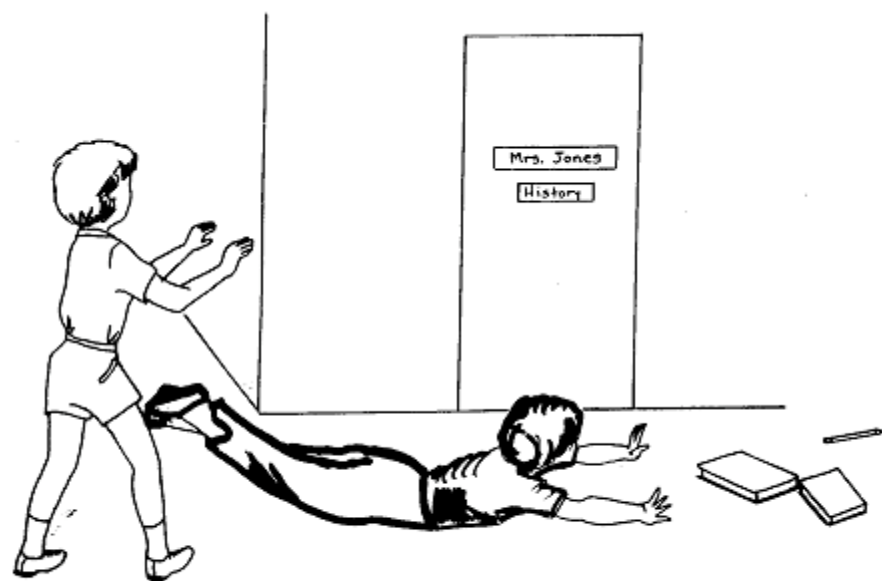
In this situation, how important would it be

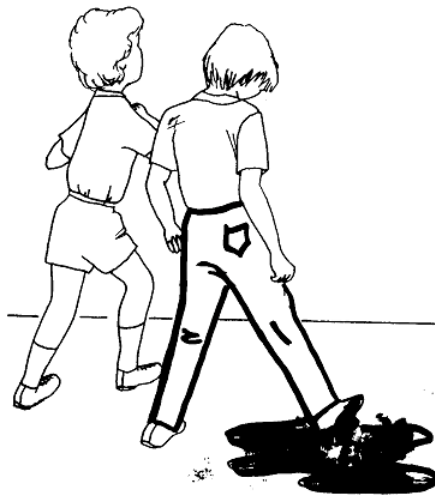
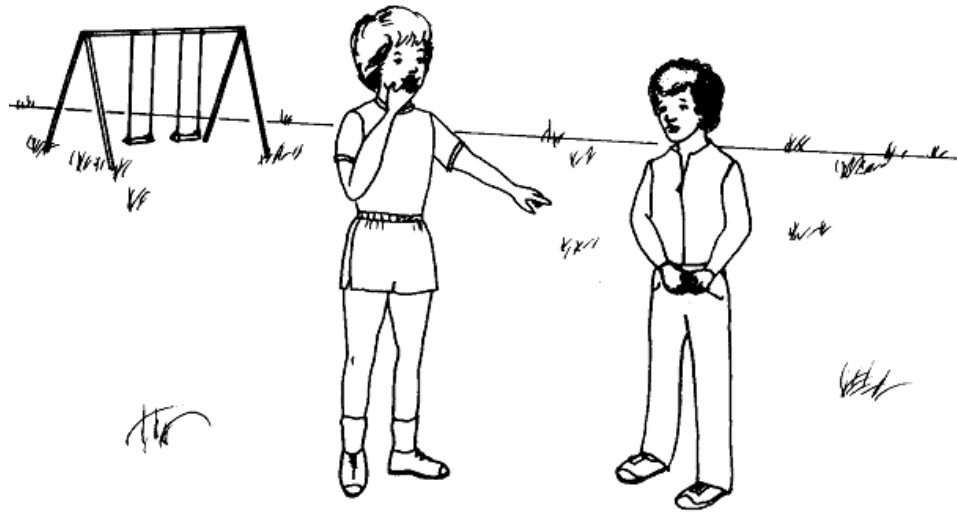
- i. To have _____ like you
- ii. To get back at _____
- iii. To get away from _____
- iv. To have _____ stop making fun of you

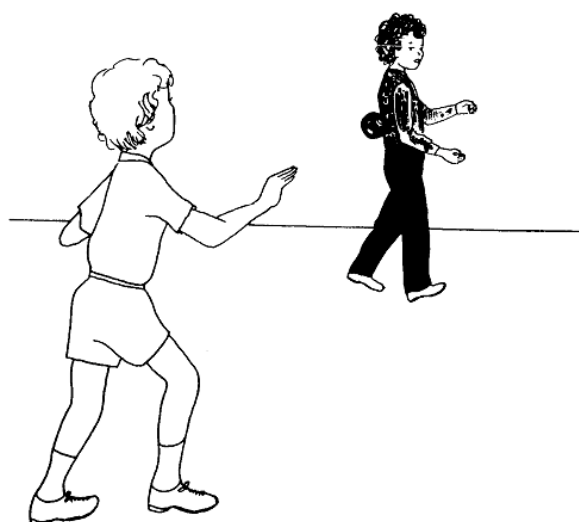
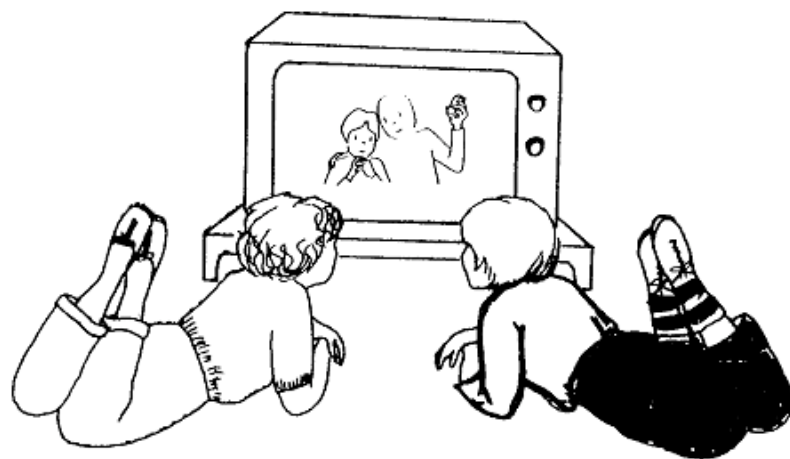
APPENDIX B: ILLUSTRATIONS

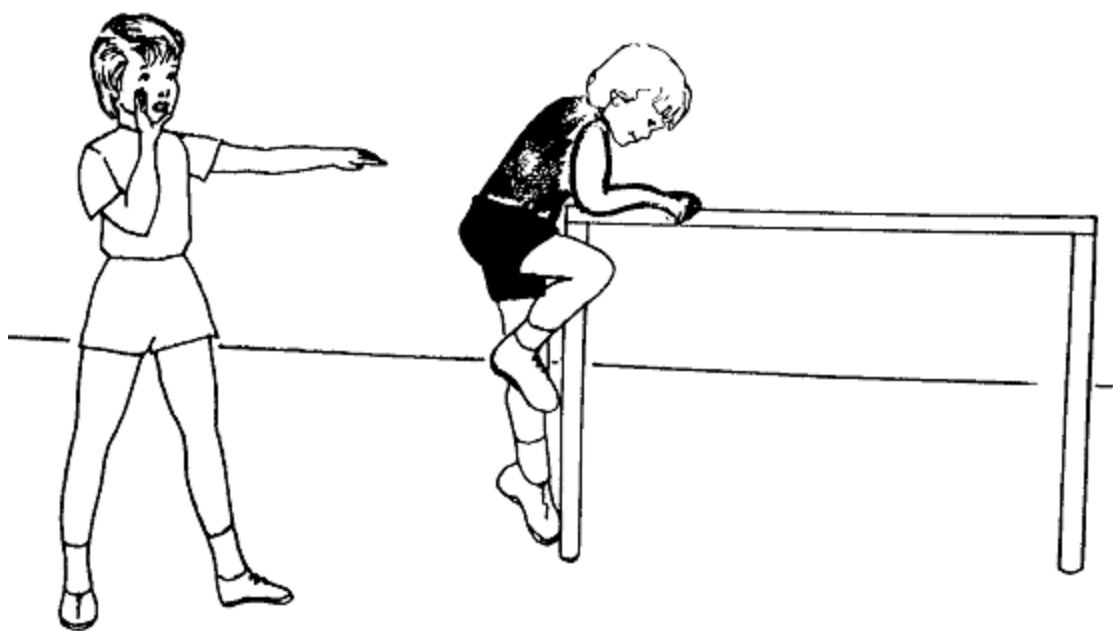
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APPENDIX C

Manual for Administering the Social Cognitive Interview for

Consequential Reasoning and Social Goals

With Friends, Peers, and Enemies

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Introduction

This manual describes the procedures for administering the social goals and consequences interview to children. It is very important that these procedures are administered in a standard way; that is the purpose of this manual. The manual begins with some general considerations about testing children in a school setting and then discusses specific procedures for the interview.

Working in the Schools

The cooperation of the school system is vital to the success of this project as well as to the feasibility of future projects. For these reasons, we must try to maintain good working relationships with school personnel. Part of this involves keeping school personnel informed about our project. For example, before visiting a school, for any reason, you should call ahead and let them know you are coming; never just drop by. Be sure to check in with the office when you arrive and let them know you are there and which teacher(s) you will be working with that day. All schools will require you to sign in and wear a visitor identification badge. Arrangements should be made in advance with individual teachers about scheduling your visits. Before you leave for the day, you should confirm your plans for your next visit. Even if you have worked out a schedule, it is good to remind the teacher when you will be there next; sometimes teachers remember that there will be a field trip that day and you will be saved a fruitless trip! Try to be responsive to any questions the teacher may have; if you don't know the answer, refer the teacher to Elizabeth (745-4390 or elizabeth.lemerise@wku.edu). Also, work out with the teacher the best way and times to take kids from class for their interviews. It is also a good idea to establish which kids have poor attendance, so that when they are in school, you can make sure that you interview them. Always treat all school personnel with courtesy and respect; it is especially important to have a good relationship with the school secretary, so you can be sure that your messages reach the teachers.

General Information About Interviewing Children

Once a child is taken from the classroom, you need to take a few minutes to

establish rapport with the child. The child will be more cooperative if he/she feels that you are receptive to him/her. Always be sure to introduce yourself and make sure the child feels comfortable with you. It is important to “set-up” each portion of the interview by describing what you are going to be doing and what you want the child to do. Throughout the interview, the experimenter needs to pay close attention to the child’s behavior and responses. You need to be thoroughly familiar with the interview in order to collect valid data. Another issue concerns children giving either the first or last answer they hear when asked to choose from multiple options. This kind of responding is called a response bias. If the child does not seem to be thinking through the questions before answering, or seems to be answering with a response bias, prompt the child “**Take your time and think really hard before you answer.**” Do this as often as necessary to ensure that the child is giving quality answers.

An important part of collecting data with children is record keeping. Be sure to fill in subject information, date, version numbers, age, etc. on all answer sheets. Without this identifying information, we might have to discard data we have collected. **Make sure that the SSID you record matches the subject’s name on your interview list and that the stimulus version and picture matches the assignment on the interview list.**

Conducting the Interview

The materials for this interview include pictures to illustrate each story, an interviewer’s protocol to record the children’s answers, and child’s protocol with the relevant visual aides and questions to help the child follow along with the interview and answer questions about the story. The experimenter needs to prepare the materials in the proper order before interviewing the child. Make sure the child and experimenter protocols match and have the appropriate version and order. Get the pictures for the stories in the appropriate order as well. **While doing the interview, use the illustration as a place marker on the child’s protocol – this way the child’s attention is focused on the appropriate place in the interview and they can refer to the illustration as a reminder for what happened in the story. Note also that the child’s protocol has the most complete versions of the interview questions, but the experimenter’s protocol has the story.**

The experimenter will be responsible for getting the child from class and conducting the interview. First, the experimenter will briefly explain the overall procedure before doing the interview: **“Hi _____, my name is _____. Today I will be talking with you about what you think about things that happen to kids. I’m going to tell you some stories about things that could happen to you at school. Your job is to pay attention to the stories so you can answer some questions about them. I want you to pretend that these stories are happening to you. For some of the stories, I will ask you to think about different kinds of kids in your class, like close friends, kids you just kind of know, and kids who are not friends. The stories will be about you and these different kinds of kids you know. For each story, I’m going to ask you some questions about what would happen if you did some different kinds of things in the stories. For example, I will ask how much the other kid would like you, how hard it would be, and how you would feel if you did certain things. I’m also going to ask you to tell me how important to you it would be to have different things happen in the stories.”**

At this point, obtain verbal assent from children younger than 8 years and written assent from children 8 years and older. **“OK, you probably remember that you took home a letter to your parents and when you brought it back to your teacher, you got a Big Red pencil. That letter was for your parents to give their permission for you to talk to me today. Now I have told you about what we are going to be doing today. I want to make sure that you want to participate before we get started. First, do you have any questions about what we will be doing?”** Answer whatever questions the child has. **“I want you to know that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am going to ask – you can tell me what you really think. If you don’t know an answer, that’s OK. I will try to explain the questions better and if you still don’t know, that’s OK too. If you decide you don’t want to answer or you want to quit, that’s OK too. So would you like to listen to my stories and answer the questions?”** At this point obtain written consent from children 8 years and older. Then continue by asking, **“Are you ready to get started on the stories now?”**

The experimenter must observe the child carefully to make sure he/she is paying attention and is on-task. Before each new story say, **“Ready for the next story? Pay attention.”** This is important because re-telling the stories lengthens the interview time. Most children should be able to stay on task for the interview, but if you get a child who is extremely fidgety, you may take short breaks between stories. **Do not take breaks in**

the middle of a story or the questions associated with a story.

To begin, remind the child what he/she has to do. Begin the session by determining the name of the provocateur (**“Now I am going to read you a description of a certain kind of kid in your class; I want you to think about what I said and tell me the kid that best fits the description for you.”**); read the description (friend, or enemy) and ask the child to name someone who matches that description (**“Tell me the name of someone in your class who is.....OK, the next few stories will be about you and _____**). Record the child’s name (first name and last initial) and indicate whether the child is in the participant’s class or not. Next, write the name on one of the provided index cards and keep the card in plain view; this will allow you and the child to keep track of what peer is involved in each story. Next, show the first picture and point to the characters; explain who the child is pretending to be and the name of the provocateur, and then read the story. Read the story, using the illustration as a guide. Use the illustration to tell the story, so that the child has a clear understanding of who’s who and what is happening. While mentioning the child, point to the child in the picture that the participant is pretending to be. While mentioning the provocateur, point to the respective child in the picture. Feel free to use emotional cues to emphasize what is going on in the story (e.g., “the ball hits you hard, and it hurts *a lot!*”). Please make sure the children are paying attention before reading the story.

After the story has been read, the experimenter presents (one at a time) 3 different kinds of responses (hostile, competent, inept) to the provocation and asks questions about the likely material and social consequences of each type of response (see section on consequential reasoning below). Remember to help the child keep his/her place by using the flip side of the story’s accompanying illustration as a place marker. The final question for each story concerns the subject’s goal for that situation (see section on goals below). The different kinds of responses (hostile, competent, inept) are presented in a counterbalanced order (as printed on the interview protocol). You must present them in this order. The order of the consequence questions (e.g., social-relational, emotional, etc.) for each response are also presented in different orders on different stories; the protocol has separate versions to counterbalance these questions. **In short, most aspects of the interview are counterbalanced and told in varying orders, so it very important that you make sure you are using the correct version on the assignment sheet and that you follow the order exactly.**

Note that the answer scales that the child uses to answer the questions are located on the participant protocol. These scales are simple enough that they will more than likely only have to be described in detail for the first story; most children will pick up on the scales' usage very quickly. After the first story, ask the first question and point to the scale underneath it. Then read aloud the answer options to the child, pointing to them as you go. Make sure to read the answers in varying orders – sometimes you may read and point to the options in one order (e.g., first, fourth, second, third), while other times you may read and point them out in a different order (e.g., fourth, second, first, third). Be sure to maintain the same emotional affect during the description of these options; don't sound 'approving' of some and 'disapproving' of other answers. Also, be especially cautious of accidental body language and behavior that implies that one answer is the correct answer, such as pointing at some answers longer than others. If the child does not appear to understand the choices, explain them in more detail. When the child provides an answer, repeat that answer back to the child to ensure accuracy, record it on your experimenter protocol, and then move on to the next question.

After the 1st set of stories is completed, say to the child: **“OK, that is the end of the stories about you and _____. Now I am going to read a description about another kind of kid in your class, and I want you to think about what I said and tell me the kid that best fits the description for you.”** Then record the name and whether or not the child is from the participant's class. Follow this same procedure after the middle set of stories is completed to introduce the final set of stories.

Measuring Consequential Reasoning. An important function of this interview is to assess children's consequential reasoning. Note that all scales used to measure consequential reasoning are printed on the child's protocol. The interviewer records the child's response on the interviewer's protocol. The following kinds of consequences are assessed for each type of response (hostile, competent, inept) to the stories:

a) *Social Relational Consequences*: This consequence deals with the social consequences associated with the response. It is assessed by asking the child: “How much would _____ like you if you [performed the hostile, competent, or inept response] after {provocation}”. Children answer with a 4 point scale (1 = not at all to 4 = a lot). This question is asked about each response; the order of presenting the alternatives on the scale should be varied across the times this question is asked.

b) *Instrumental Consequences*: The consequence involves a judgment about whether the particular response (hostile, competent or inept) will actually work. In other words, if the child enacts the [hostile, competent, inept] response, will the provocateur stop performing the provoking response in the future? It is assessed by asking the child, “if you did _____, would _____ stop doing {the provocation}?” A 4 point scale (1 = never to 4 = just about all the time) is used for this judgment.

c) *Emotional Consequences*: Here we are interested in how performing the particular response makes the child feel about him or herself. Children are first asked whether they would feel angry, sad, happy, or just OK inside about performing the response. Then they are asked to make an intensity judgment: “how _____ would you feel inside?” using a 4 point scale: 1 = not much to 4 = a lot.

d) *Self Efficacy for Performing the Response*: Here we ask children to evaluate how difficult (or easy) it would be for them to perform the particular response in this situation. A four point scale is used: 1 = very hard to 4 = not hard at all, very easy.

Because we ask so many questions about each story and each response to the problem in the story, it is REALLY IMPORTANT to repeat the story stem so the child doesn’t forget what the story is about. Additionally, it is important to repeat the particular response being assessed so it is clear to the child what is exactly being rated.

Goal Importance Ratings. For each story, after the social consequences questions, the experimenter will ask the child to rate the importance of 4 different social goals for the situation portrayed in each story. Before asking the children to rate these goals, you should repeat the story. **“We’ve done a lot of questions, so I am going to tell you the story again”.** You will notice that the order of these goals has been counterbalanced across the 9 stimulus stories. Ask the questions in the order they are printed and record the child’s response for each question. For each story, the “most important goal” is the one to which the child gave a “5” importance rating (or the highest rating given). If the child rates more than one goal as “5”, review the goals rated “5” with

the child and ask the child to pick the one that is the most important of all. Record this information in the space provided. You will notice that each goal has a number next to it (from 1 to 4) which signifies what number you should record if that goal is chosen as the most important.

For example:

In this situation, how important would it be

- | | | |
|------|--|----------|
| i. | To have _____ like you (1) | <u>4</u> |
| ii. | To get back at _____ (4) | <u>3</u> |
| iii. | To get away from _____ (3) | <u>5</u> |
| iv. | To have _____ stop making fun of you (2) | <u>2</u> |
| v. | Most important goal? | _____ |

In this case, the child has clearly indicated through his ratings that his most important goal is to get away from the other child; you would indicate this by writing a “3” in the “most important goal” blank because “3” is the number assigned to that goal.

You’ve done a great job answering all of my questions! Thanks for helping me learn more about things that happen to kids. I really enjoyed talking with you today. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me? Listen to child’s response and answer any questions he or she has.

So that we can make sure that everyone is hearing these stories for the first time (just like you did!), it’s really important not to tell any of the other kids what exactly we talked about. You can tell them we talked about “stories” or “things that happen to kids,” but don’t tell them exactly what stories we read, okay?

Thank you for your help. Let’s go back to class.

